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Ophthalmic Literature

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Vol. IV. SEPTEMBER, 1914 No. 9

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PRICE FIVE DOLLARS PER YEAR, IN ADVANCE

Published Monthly by EDWARD JACKSON, 318 Majestic Building, Denver, Colorado, U. S. A.

Entered as second-class matter November 6, 1912, at the Postoffice at Denver, Colorado, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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934 15th Street — Denver, Colorado

Ophthalmic Literature

VOL. IV. SEPTEMBER, 1914. NO. 9.

Edited by EDWARD JACKSON. Assisted by WILLIAM H. CRISP.

TO LEAD IN OPHTHALMOLOGY.

America's opportunity opened by war in Europe extends in many directions. In commerce and manufactures it has suggested enormous schemes for extension. The influence of American financial centers becomes relatively greater. There will be a similar change in the centers of scientific investigation and learning. It is worth while to consider if the leadership in ophthalmology may not to a large extent be transferred to this side of the Atlantic. The old world centers of Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna, will all be profoundly and permanently influenced by the results of the war, apart from the temporary suspension of their scientific activity.

Such a transfer will not take place suddenly; nor without carefully planned, intelligent, purposeful effort on the part of the profession in America to bring it about. In certain departments of medicine America has already taken the lead. In operative surgery, in the control of yellow fever, in the practical application of what is known with regard to malaria, the leadership of American surgeons and physicians has been acknowledged throughout the world. The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research leads in the domain of laboratory investigation. In ophthalmology we are in some ways near to transition. In practically dealing with errors of refraction, and the mechanical arrangement of lenses, we already lead.

It is a time when we should carefully consider the weak points in American ophthalmology, and turn our attention and energies to strengthening them. Being cut off from the old European centers of learning, we should take up seriously the problem of establishing our own institutions upon a basis, and with a capacity suited to the needs of a new world. Already it has happened more than once that prominent ophthalmologists of Europe have considered the sending of their sons, or have advised young men in whom they were interested, to take an American year to gain the practical point of view, the spirit of direct attack.

One serious deficiency is lack of institutions devoted primarily to furnishing opportunities for scientific work; due to the fact that capital has never been directed to this object. Another is lack of efficient organization, because of separation by great distances, and the blunders of a crude democracy. No matter how long the war in Europe lasts, no matter how many European hospitals are destroyed by fire and bomb, or the sweeping away of their financial support, the leadership in ophthalmology will not pass to America until the greatness of our ophthalmic hospitals is estimated, not by the number of patients that enter the doors, or the number of operations done

on them, but by the amount and quality of the scientific observations that come forth from them, to guide the profession and assist humanity.

What is needed is not so much new institutions, like the Rockefeller Institute, but rather that in existing hospitals and clinics the predominant importance of original investigation and thorough teaching of the science of ophthalmology should be recognized in the apportionment of funds. Nor is this desirable recognition so far from achievement. In the universities of three of our middle western states these needs are now fairly recognizd. Michigan, Minnesota, and Iowa have all provided for teaching fellowships, that offer some opportunity and inducement to young men to develop the scientific side of ophthalmology. In the last named the salaries paid in this department, chiefly to younger men, aggregate more than five thousand dollars per annum. More effort can be devoted to the scientific development of ophthalmology only as the necessary support is given to those who are willing and able to do the work needed.

The organization required is not the ordinary forming and supporting of medical societies. In this matter of societies devoted to ophthalmology this country is at least abreast of Europe. It is in the larger facts of general professional and educational relations, that ophthalmic science is not sufficiently provided for. The status of the specialist is far from being so well fixed or so well understood in the United States as it is in Europe. We have never had anything like the differentiation between the surgeon and the physician that has been recognized by the profession, the community, and the laws of Great Britain. By teaching positions, hospital connections, or previous professional association, the real student of ophthalmology in Germany has been for generations more generally recognized in the community than is yet the case in the United States. The American conception of one great medical profession in which all special students and practitioners find their place must not be given up. But in harmony with it must be worked out the practical recognition of specialization, rendered necessary by the development of science and art and the limitation of the individual mind and life.

Ophthalmology has suffered greatly from the supposition that the man who has failed to develop in a general practice could go to New York, or Vienna for a few months and come back an efficient specialist; or even that he might buy an ophthalmoscope, and a trial case, and stop attending children with the scarlet fever, and women in labor, and so become able to meet the ophthalmic requirements of his community. If the specialist by these means could secure recognition from the profession, nothing more than the friendship of the newspaper reporter, and a room full of patients with drops in their eyes, could be needed to secure the support of the community.

But a mass of specialists of this kind, however large and active, will assist very little in the development of ophthalmic science. In so far as they intercept patients and keep them for weeks or months under inefficient treatment, or subject them to needless or poorly executed operations that bring discredit upon the whole profession of

medicine, they constitute a very serious obstacle to the development of ophthalmology in America. It is therefore an important step that has been proposed at the Atlantic City meeting of the Section on Ophthalmology of the American Medical Association, that a definite course of study should be recognized as proper preparation for ophthalmic practice, and that the special organizations of the country should unite in securing examinations to test the fitness of those who offer themselves to the profession and the public as especially qualified ophthalmologists.

A body of professional men thus sifted will become the basis for special societies in which ophthalmic science will find conditions favorable for its best development; and will exert an influence on educational institutions that will force them to rise to higher standards of efficiency, and the recognition of scientific ability, wherever found—an expression of developed and mature democracy. Such a body of trained ophthalmologists will also furnish contributions to our ophthalmic journals that will raise their standard to a level with the best that have been published in Europe, and will exert an influence that will strengthen the support of the better journals, while tending to eliminate those which do not serve the broader interests of science and the profession.

With better organization of the profession and better provision for scientific workers, local and private interests will not be supreme in the naming of teachers and hospital surgeons. The great distance between our teaching centers, their comparative isolation, and the fact that no strong professional body existed whose general view might counteract local prejudice, has led in America to the almost invariable rule of filling vacancies in faculties and hospital staffs, not by the appointment of those who could best do the work, but of those who happened to live nearest, or be best known in a limited locality. This defect in our social organization will be very slowly remedied. But special societies and a definite body of specialists in the profession will exert a good influence in the right direction.

With the higher professional opportunities going to those who can use them best; with ophthalmic journals supported and developed by a trained profession; with the recognition of real fitness for ophthalmic practice; with opportunities opened to the younger men to develop their abilities as scientific investigators and teachers; with the recognition on the part of the public that scientific learning and trained efficiency on the part of professional advisers are worth all that they cost, America will be prepared to take at least a share in the leadership of ophthalmology. The democratic leadership of the future will recognize not a single figure overshadowing all others, but will honor each worker for the thing which he has done and can do best.

BOOK NOTICES.

Transactions of the American Ophthalmological Society, Volume xiii, Pt. III, 300 pages, Illustrated. Published by the Society, Dr. W. M. Sweet, Secretary, Philadelphia, Pa.

Although not put forth as a jubilee volume to celebrate the half century of the Society's work, this is in several ways the best of its

series of annual issues. We wonder how many American ophthalmologists are acquainted with these Transactions, and appreciate what a substantial contribution they are to the literature of ophthalmology. The issue before us contains about three hundred pages, in which are printed twenty-four scientific papers, some of which gave rise to live, practical discussions that occupy twice as much space as the paper itself. These papers are illustrated by twenty figures in the text, and twenty-six plates, of which eight are printed in colors.

Besides the report of rare and interesting cases there are descriptions of new operations for removal of pterygium and capsulo-muscular advancement. Sclero-corneal trephining is the subject of two papers and an extended discussion. There are papers on modification of cataract extraction, and among other subjects taken up are cranial deformity with ocular changes; melanosis of the conjunctiva; peculiar opacities of the cornea; blepharochalasis; sporotrichosis; anomalies of ocular movements; occlusion of pupils by cysts and masses developed from the uveal layer of the iris; tumors; ocular tuberculosis; transient monocular blindness; retinitis with massive exudation; the convergence index and converging power, and curvature and index myopia. The papers on these subjects are by men of established reputation in the literature of ophthalmology, and in their scientific value and practical interest they equal those to be found in the transactions of any European ophthalmological congress.

Transactions of the Section on Ophthalmology, American Medical Association. 1914. Pages 497. 8 vo. Eighty illustrations. Twenty-three plates. Chicago: A. M. A. Press.

The papers and reports read before the Section on Ophthalmology, with the discussion to which they give rise, have a substantial permanent value that makes their preservation in book form extremely desirable, while the very low price at which the volume is offered ought to secure a place for it in the library of every practitioner who undertakes to give especial attention to diseases of the eye.

The present volume contains twenty formal papers, five reports from important committees and eight communications describing new instruments, apparatus or mechanical methods. While it does not furnish any expensive colored plates, its 103 illustrations all serve the purpose of supplementing and explaining the text.

But it is the discussions contained in the volume that give it a peculiar value. The publication of the papers in a pre-sessional volume makes it possible for members of the Section carefully to prepare for their discussion. The discussions so prepared are definite, exact and bear directly upon the point at issue to an extent that is not equalled by the discussions before any other ophthalmological meeting in the world.

Two defects that might easily be removed mar the value of the book as a work of reference. There are no page headings to indicate either the author of the paper or the subject under discussion. In running over the book to find a particular paper one must stop and read in the text to find what it is about. This is always felt to be an annoyance when one is looking over various books for particular facts. The other deficiency is the absence of an alphabetical index. It is true that one can use the table of contents to find the position of a particular paper in the volume. But this is not so conveniently used as an index, and many topics that might be given place in the index will not be found in the table of contents. We hope that some officer of the Section or Association will bring credit to himself and the Section by seeing that in the next volume of this valuable series these points will be attended to.

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Abstracts From Foreign Journals

Cavara, V. Pathogenic Importance for the Eye of Some Species of Mucor. (Annali di Ottalmologia, 42nd year, page 729.)

The experiments described include a series in which the different molds of the Mucor family were inoculated into the cornea, a series in which they were inoculated into the anterior chamber, and a series in which they were inoculated into the vitreous. Besides Mucor cornealis, which had been isolated from the cornea of a patient, other pathogenic Mucors were found capable of vegetating and proliferating on the rabbit's cornea, including Mucor corymbifer, M. Truchosi and M. Regnieri, all, however, in less degree than M. cornealis.

Intralamellar inoculation into the cornea of spores or mycelium of these varieties gives rise to a special form of keratomycosis, characterized by a radiate infiltration, comparable to a young colony of

the same parasites on ordinary culture media. At first subepithelial, this infiltration soon becomes superficial and somewhat in relief by loss of corneal epithelium. It is accompanied by slight reaction on the part of the iris and conjunctiva. Subsequently a leash of vessels originating from the limbus surrounds and invades the mycotic patch, which disappears, giving place to a corneal macula.

Intralamellar inoculation into the cornea of one of the other pathogenic Mucors, M. pusillus and Rhizomucor parasiticus, results in a dense circumscribed infiltration at the point of inoculation, which disappears in relatively short time without becoming vascularized, and without tendency to corneal ulcer. Corneal inoculation of the saprophyte varieties, such as Mucor racemosus, M. mucedo and Rhizopus nigricans, is not followed by any inflammatory phenomenon, the spores soon die, and the traumatic lesion heals in two or three days.

Inoculation into the anterior chamber of either of the four pathogenic varieties first named above gives rise to an iridocyclitis of severe course, characterized by the formation of a fibrinous exudate at the level of the iris and pupil. Somewhat less severe lesions are produced by injection of the parasiticus and pusillus. Inoculation into the anterior chamber of an emulsion of the spores of the saprophyte varieties causes merely insignificant changes. Inoculation into the vitreous of the pathogenic varieties gives rise to the formation of a dense exudate, whereas inoculation of the saprophyte varieties produces only a clouding of the vitreous.

The production of severe disturbances seems to be limited to the pathogenic varieties closely related to M. cornealis, or perhaps merely representing slight modifications of the same organism. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the results of the experiments on rabbits are entirely applicable to men.

Verderame, F. Sclerokeratitis and Serous Cyclitis With Rise of Tension in Ophthalmic Herpes. (Annali di Ottalmologia, 42nd year, page 772.)

In a woman of 54 years, a few days after the appearance of herpes of the skin, inflammation began in the eye of the same side. At first this did not give rise to serious disturbance, but afterwards vision was reduced and the patient suffered from severe ocular pain. Five weeks after the appearance of the first eye symptoms there were the characteristic signs of a serous cyclitis with rise of ocular tension. After another five weeks an inflammation began in the sclera, and a part of the cornea corresponding to the scleral involvement developed an opacity of the parenchyma, accompanied by inflammatory signs. Resolution occurred in the course of several months, leaving traces in the sclera and an opacity of the cornea, with slight deposits on Descemet's membrane. The tension returned to normal. The skin and Wassermann reactions for syphilis were negative. In the absence of other etiologic factors, the author is disposed to associate the attack of herpes, including the ocular disturbances, with a series of attacks of "rheumatism," from which the patient had suffered, always in the extremities of the left side; especially in view of the fact that scleritis in general seems to have more or less in common with rheumatism.

Zani, D. Uncommon Syndrome of Syphilitic Osteoperiostitis of the Orbit. (Annali di Ottalmologia, 42nd year, page 790.)

A married woman of 39 years had suffered from a series of symptoms extending over five months, and the actual cause of which was not diagnosed until the end of that period. The disturbance began with severe supraorbital and temporal pains on the left side, more marked at night, and accompanied by lacrimation and closure of the left palpebral fissure. The pains disappeared in a few days, leaving

the palpebral fissure closed for some weeks. After the eye opened, the patient discovered that it was turned inward and was incapable of outward rotation. At the end of two months vision began to diminish rapidly, and the patient noticed a whitish patch at the center of the cornea, which grew rapidly and was accompanied by symptoms of irritation. Shortly after this she visited a hospital for the first time, but the nature of the condition was not diagnosed. At examination two months later the left eye was slightly exophthalmic and strongly rotated inward. The lower inner three-fourths of the cornea were occupied by a large leucoma. There was paralysis of all the movements of the eye, but opening and closing of the lids were normally executed. Cornea and conjunctiva were completely insensible, as was also the whole area supplied by the first two branches of the fifth nerve on that side. There was some exudate in the pupil with partial posterior synechia, and the details of the optic disc were very indistinct. The vision of this eye was countng fingers at three meters. Palpation of the orbit disclosed nothing abnormal.

Dermatological examination showed the presence of cutaneous and mucous lesions of secondary syphilis. The symptoms had therefore probably been produced by a syphilitic osteoperiostitis belonging to the secondary period, beginning at the apex of the orbit, and involving one after the other the ophthalmic division of the fifth nerve, the abducens, the motor oculi (with a peculiar avoidance of the branch to the elevator of the lid and to the rectus internus), the superior maxillary, and in all probability the optic nerve.

As regards the eye, antisyphilitic treatment resulted merely in partial clearing of the corneal leucoma and slight restoration of the power of abduction. The optic disc became atrophic, and vision was reduced to counting fingers at two meters.

Mosso, G. Luminous Sense in Albinos, Influence of Retinal Pigment on Luminous Sensibility and Adaptation. (Annali di Ottalmologia, 43rd year, page 79.)

Tabular statements are given of the results of examination of a series of cases with the adaptometer of Nagel and according to his method of procedure. All the individuals examined had normal vision, and were within the limits of age for which the amplitude of adaptation is nearly equal. It was not possible to establish a constant relationship between the pigmentation of the fundus and the adaptation value. Fuchs has already demonstrated the reciprocal independence of the pigmentation of the iris and of the retina. Further studies of four albinos showed the type of curve of slow adaptation, with generally low values; figures relatively superior to the normal being found only in the first period of adaptation. Tests made with diaphragms placed before the iris, varying in size from one to ten mm. in diameter, gave in all four cases lower values of sensibility, both during the first minutes of adaptation and during advanced adaptation; the curve being continuously inferior to that of Piper-Nagel throughout its course. This fact clearly confirms the importance in albinos of the greater permeability of the general ocular tissues to even small quantities of light. The retinal pigment is probably not the only, perhaps even not the most important, determining factor in the function of adaptation.

Ophthalmic Journals

American Journal of Ophthalmology, St. Louis, Mo.
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Printed by Western Newspaper Union